



WGU News  
For Immediate Release  
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## **Western Governors University Offering Scholarships for Rural Teaching**

Salt Lake City, Utah – (June 28, 2007) Western Governors University ([www.wgu.edu/ruraleducators](http://www.wgu.edu/ruraleducators)) is working to increase the national pool of highly qualified rural teachers, particularly with the nationwide shortage of math and science teachers. WGU is offering \$ 7,500 scholarships to qualified individuals in rural areas of Montana. Prospective recipients are those who reside in rural areas who want to become licensed teachers in math or science, or existing teachers who live in rural areas and want to earn a master's degree in math or science education. The scholarships are part of a U.S. Department of Labor grant recently awarded to WGU.

The grant project includes working with the Montana Department of Labor and Industry and local rural school districts to identify and prepare potential rural teacher candidates. The grant will allow WGU to provide financial, academic and clinical support for teacher candidates, including the scholarships for qualified students. The \$ 7,500 scholarship will be credited to the recipient's scholarship account in the amount of \$ 1,500 per six-month term.

WGU's unique mission is to expand access to higher education through its online competency-based degree programs. Because the degrees are offered via the Internet, they are accessible to those living in rural areas who cannot travel long distances to participate in classes at traditional campuses. The competency-based programs focus on measuring what students know and can do, rather than measuring time or credit hours, and allow working adults that have competencies, for example in math and science, to complete their programs more quickly but without compromising the quality of graduates.

The WGU Teachers College is only four years old, but already has more than 4,600 students, including 1,050 students in math and science teacher education, making WGU one of the largest providers of math and science teacher education in the nation. In addition, the Teachers College has already graduated more than 1,325 teachers, and its graduates have become licensed teachers in nearly every state. The WGU Teachers College is the only online teacher education program to be accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

WGU President Dr. Robert Mendenhall says, "This initiative is crucial to filling the high-need teacher shortages in rural school districts, including retaining teachers in those communities. The quality of teachers is the single most important variable in the quality of education that we provide our youth."

“There are so many opportunities in the fields of math and science,” said Montana’s First Lady Nancy Schweitzer, a botanist, who initiated Montana’s Math and Science Initiative for K-12. “Montana has good students, who with the help of great teachers will become top innovators, scientists and engineers in a global workforce.”

“Montana is America’s most rural state with 35 percent of our residents living in a rural county,” said Montana Labor Commissioner Keith Kelly. “Distance learning provides all Montanans equal access to advanced career pathways without having to leave their local community.”

Some of the grant money will also be used to develop and disseminate a new model for addressing workforce development of rural teachers that can be implemented on a national scale. WGU is partnering with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) in the implementation and evaluation of this rural teacher initiative.

More information is available at [www.wgu.edu/ruraleducators](http://www.wgu.edu/ruraleducators) , <http://www.dli.mt.gov/>, or call WGU toll free at 1-866-225-5948.

### **About Western Governors University (WGU)**

WGU is the only accredited university in the U.S. offering online competency-based degree programs. The private non-profit university was founded and is supported by 19 governors, as well as more than 20 leading corporations and foundations. WGU offers bachelor’s and master’s degrees in business, information technology, teacher education and healthcare, with students in all 50 states and 10 foreign countries. More information is available at [www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu).